

Suitability Criteria

The purpose of the suitability phase of the study process is to determine whether eligible rivers would be appropriate additions to the NWSRS by considering tradeoffs between corridor development and river protection. Suitability considerations include the environment and economic consequences of designation and the manageability of a river if it were designated by Congress.

A suitability study is designed to answer these questions:

1. Should the river's free-flowing character, water quality, and ORVs be protected, or are one or more other uses important enough to warrant doing otherwise?
2. Will the river's free-flowing character, water quality, and ORVs be protected through designation? Is designation the best method for protecting the river corridor? In answering these questions, the benefits and impacts of WSR designation must be evaluated and alternative protection methods considered.
3. Is there a demonstrated commitment to protect the river by any nonfederal entities that may be partially responsible for implementing protective management?

Congress identified the factors to be considered and documented as a basis for determining the suitability of a river for the National System in Sections 4(a), 5(c) and 6(c) of the Wild and Scenic River Act.

1. The status of landownership, minerals (surface and subsurface) use in the area, including the amount of private land involved and associated or incompatible uses.
2. Reasonably foreseeable potential uses of the land and related waters that would be enhanced, foreclosed, or curtailed if the area were included in the NWSRS, and values that would be foreclosed or diminished if the area were not designated.
3. Federal, state, tribal, local, public, or other interest in designating or not designating the river.
4. Estimated cost of acquiring necessary lands, interests in lands, and administering the area if designated.
5. Ability of the agency to manage and protect the river area or segment as a WSR, or other means to protect the identified values other than WSR
6. Historical or existing rights that could be adversely affected with designation.
7. Adequacy of local zoning and other land use controls in protecting the river's ORVs by preventing incompatible development.
8. Support or opposition of local governments, state governments, and stakeholders to designation under the WSR Act.
9. Consistency of designation with other agency plans, programs, or policies.
10. Contribution to a river system watershed or basin integrity.